

# Division of Small Business awards EDGE Grants to 15 Delaware companies

**SMYRNA, Del. (August 11, 2021)** – A company working to alleviate symptoms of Parkinson's disease, a maker of wearable cooling protective gear, a specialty running store, and a meadery were among the 15 Delaware small businesses recognized Wednesday as awardees of the third round of Encouraging Development, Growth and Expansion (EDGE) Grants from the state Division of Small Business.

Gov. John Carney and Division of Small Business Director Jordan Schulties announced the companies at an event at Painted Stave Distilling in Smyrna, where EDGE grant recipient Taco Jardin currently has a food truck located.

"We need to make it easy for businesses to start and stay here in Delaware," said **Governor Carney**. "That's why we created the EDGE Grant program to encourage even more small businesses to expand and innovate. The grant recipients in this round span a wide range of industries, but each owner has the drive and determination necessary to start then grow their business. After an incredibly challenging year, we remain committed to rebuilding our economy and supporting Delaware small businesses."

Businesses who are less than five years old and employ no more than 10 employees are eligible to apply for an EDGE Grant. The grants are awarded through a competitive selection process. STEM-based companies can receive up to \$100,000 for eligible expenses while Entrepreneur Class (non-STEM) businesses can receive up to \$25,000.

EDGE is a matching grant program. The Division of Small Business matches a winning business's investment on a 3-to-1

basis. The business can spend EDGE grant funds on expenses that help improve the company's long-term chances of success, such as a marketing campaign to help acquire more customers or purchasing a needed piece of equipment that can increase production capacity.

"EDGE Grants are helping to level the playing field for promising Delaware small companies as they compete with more established, larger businesses and as they recover from the coronavirus pandemic," **Secretary of State Jeff Bullock said.** "Small businesses are the backbone of Delaware's economy, and this program is just one of the many ways the Division of Small Business has made a strong, positive impact on the state's economy by assisting hardworking business owners."

Since EDGE launched in 2019, more than \$2 million has been awarded to 35 promising Delaware small businesses in industries ranging from wearable technology to agribusiness to craft brewing.

"Despite the challenges of the last year, Delaware's entrepreneurs continue to find innovative ways to ensure the success of their businesses by developing new products, changing how they interact with their customers, or thinking creatively about their future goals," **Division Director Jordan Schulties said.** "The EDGE Grant offers us the opportunity to recognize this innovation by providing much-needed capital assistance at a time when our state's small businesses need it most."

This is the third round of funding for the program since it launched in 2019. In this latest round, which opened in April, 282 businesses applied for funding. Twenty-three finalists gave public presentations before a panel of expert judges on June 22, 23 and 24 at Delaware Tech in Dover.

Taco Jardin received \$25,000 in EDGE Grant funds to purchase a second food truck to expand their reach throughout Kent

County.

“This funding from the EDGE Grant program is significant for a small business like ours and will create opportunities for our business that would not be possible without it,” **said chef and co-owner Charles Kelchner**. “My business partners and I are honored to be selected as a winner of the grant funding. I know it will go a long way in helping our business grow and thrive in the months and years to come.”

### **EDGE Grant Recipients**

#### **STEM class**

##### **Desikant (Wilmington)**

Founded in late 2019 by Kwaku Temeng, Desikant Technologies created technology that incorporates electronics into protective gear to actively exchange warm, humid interior air with cooler, drier ambient air. The company’s current project is developing and testing a cooling vest that surgeons can wear to prevent heat exhaustion during long surgeries. Desikant will use its grant to add new capabilities (intelligent, automatic operation) to its technology toolkit and pave the way for developing products for demanding, high value, and profitable applications.

##### **Curative Sciences (Newark)**

Curative Sciences is an early-stage life science start-up developing a comprehensive treatment platform for Oral Mucositis, tissue swelling in the mouth often caused by cancer treatment. The platform includes light-based therapy as well as oral care products for the management of intermediate to long-term oral side effects of cancer therapy. The grant will allow Curative Sciences to develop the next generation of their light-based therapy device.

##### **Resonate Forward (Newark)**

This company was established to commercialize technology to help mitigate the symptoms of Parkinson’s disease. The grant

will make it possible for Resonate Forward to develop a manufacturable prototype and design for their RMband device that mitigates tremors in patients with Parkinson's disease. In addition, grant funds will also be used to help the company secure research/office space at the University of Delaware's STAR campus.

### **Neggster (Wilmington)**

Always looking to solve problems, Newark's Kasai Guthrie will be utilizing his EDGE funding to enable young adults to learn how to responsibly manage money and eventually hopes to transform his clients into entrepreneurs. Neggster, Guthrie's new banking app, will teach its users how to better oversee their funds and to guide them to a more prosperous future.

### **Aqua Science (Newark)**

Aqua Science LLC is a biotechnology start-up that supplies high-quality testing solutions for the water quality testing market, including biosensor-based products, lab services, or complementary products sourced from others. The company created a BioLight product line used for toxicity testing of water and soil by municipalities, industrial companies, and utilities who demand high-quality results and adherence to regulation. They will use the grant funding to develop a luminometer to be used with the BioLight kits.

### Entrepreneur class

### **Doña Maria's Pupuseria (Seaford)**

Making Seaford a better place, one storefront at a time is exactly what Craig de Mariana Aleman and his family are all about. With their EDGE funding, Doña Maria will be expanding their restaurant outside and offering hand-dipped ice cream services to locals. While dining outside, customers will also be able to enjoy a beautiful new mural that Craig will commission, highlighting a local artist.

### **Elite Feet (Middletown)**

Elite Feet is a local, family-owned and operated retail specialty running store that sells high quality footwear and apparel for the entire family. The company will use grant funds to create a mobile retail store in a climate-controlled trailer. The mobile trailer will allow customers to be fitted for and purchase athletic shoes while attending races or other events, increasing the company's profits and return on investment.

### **Taco Jardin (Smyrna)**

Charles "Cheeks" Kelchner and his business partners are passionate about great things – specifically, street tacos served from their food truck, Taco Jardin, located at the Painted Stave Distilling in Smyrna. Chef Cheeks will be utilizing his newly obtained EDGE funding to purchase another food truck to take his fare on the road throughout Kent County.

### **Paragon Life and Fitness (Wilmington)**

Vickie George, co-founder of Paragon Life and Fitness, believes that engaging in exercise should not be just for the elite or the able-bodied, and inclusiveness should have a place in the fitness industry. Paragon Life and Fitness plans to use its EDGE grant funding to open a fitness facility for adults and people with physical disabilities that will include wheelchair/dual accessible equipment.

### **Grail Sports (Elsmere)**

Founder Eugene Delle Donne launched Grail Sports LLC during the summer of 2018 with aspirations to penetrate the sports media world. After evolving from specializing in online blogging and podcasts, in January 2021, Grail Sports entered into a lease agreement to acquire a 24,000 square foot gymnasium to create an elite training facility for youth programs called the Grail Sports Complex. EDGE grant funding will be used to renovate the lower level of the sports complex to allow Grail Sports the opportunity to offer indoor training in multiple sports.

### **1440 Film (Wilmington)**

1440 Film Co. is a full-service video production company located in Wilmington that specializes in commercials, documentaries, and branded content. The company will use grant funding to purchase a cargo van and various grip filmmaking equipment in order to continue delivering high-quality work that is creative, engaging, and makes an impact on its clients.

### **Tempest Risk Management (Wilmington)**

Tempest Risk Management provides world class business continuity and disaster recovery solutions to businesses and communities enabling them to survive and thrive. EDGE grant funding will be used to build and launch the Tempest Risk Management Portal giving Delaware's small and medium business owners instant access to critical resources when they are needed during a business emergency or disruption.

### **Brimming Horn Meadery (Milton)**

When Jon Talkington and JR Walker opened the Brimming Horn Meadery in Milton, Delaware in 2017 they had no idea how quickly their niche corner of the market would grow. Fast forward to 2021 and now the meadery is yet again expanding their horizons into the food truck industry. With their newly acquired EDGE funding, Jon and JR will be opening a Viking-themed food truck to complement their meads and serve their hungry clientele.

### **Gingham + Grace Clothing (Harbeson)**

Jami Jackson has grown her once small online boutique shop to a brick-and-mortar storefront in Harbeson, Delaware where her clients receive excellent customer service and one-of-a-kind pieces. With her EDGE funding, Jackson plans on investing in new inventory to grow sales, with hopes to bring on a new employee who can help her better serve her patrons in Delaware

and the 29 other states that she ships to currently.

### **Delaware Tool Exchange (Newark)**

This veteran-owned company acquires tools and equipment on a consignment basis and offers them for sale at fair market prices from a brick-and-mortar industrial facility in Newark. The company will use its grant to lease, build out, and open a second location in or near Newark, and equip their existing location with an integrated system to receive, inspect, clean, and repair tools more efficiently.